

STAT

CRITICAL REVIEW OF CERTAIN SCIENTIFIC WORKS OF THE SERBSKIY'S
INSTITUTE OF CRIMINAL PSYCHIATRY

author: Ya. M. Kalashnik

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CRITICAL REVIEW OF CERTAIN SCIENTIFIC WORKS
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THE INSTITUTE OF FORENSIC PSYCHIATRY IMENI SERBSKIY

Senior Scientific Associate Ya. M. Kalashnik

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The resolutions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party relating to ideological problems have called upon the Soviet intelligentsia including those who are scientific workers to stand firm in the positions of Bolshevik party solidarity, to take a leading part in activity relating to the interests of the Party and the State, to participate vigorously in life, to support enthusiastically all that is new and communistic, and to overcome the surviving influences which hinder Soviet people in their progress.

The surviving elements of capitalism in the consciousness of certain of our scientists manifests itself in blind, uncritical imitation of bourgeois scientists and in kowtowing to their "authority" at the expense of native science and its priority.

The scientific-research work of the Central Scientific-Research Institute of Forensic Psychiatry imeni Serbskiy on the whole occupies a proper methodological position in charting an independent route for Soviet forensic psychiatry. It closely relates its theoretical work to forensic psychiatric practice. It has given forensic psychiatric evaluations for clinical forms

of psychic illnesses and has worked out problems relating to sanity by way of forensic psychiatric expert opinions which is an original feature of Soviet forensic psychiatry.

Nevertheless, there have been individual works put out by the Institute in which errors of a methodological character were permitted to appear, a fact that was pointed out by the Learned Council of the Institute in considering its progress at a session of VASKhNIL devoted to problems of biology.

There was pointed out, by way of example, that a serious deficiency existed with respect to objective description of certain theories relating to forensic psychiatry because of insufficient Party criticism, and manifest overevaluation in certain works by associates of the Institute of foreign sources, while at the same time no mention was made of outstanding Russian scientists. Lombrosianism, Freudism, and other "scientific" bourgeois theories were not being subjected to serious criticism in the works of the Institute; at the same time these scientific works did not make use of the theories of Pavlov, Sechenov, and Vvedenskiy.

One form of the more active idealistic currents in criminal law and in forensic psychiatry is Lombrosianism, including a modernized variation of it, Neo-Lombrosianism, appearing as an offshoot of the anthropological school in criminal law. As is known, these theories have evolved a biological concept of crime and by doing this have completely removed it as a problem of the class structure of society and the class

character of crime.

As early as in 1936 the Institute put out a symposium entitled Psychopathy in which these bourgeois pseudoscientific theories were subjected to detailed criticism. Since that time the Institute has added nothing of substance, although these "teachings", while changing their form, have continued to exist and exert their influence on certain Soviet psychiatrists.

Ts. M. Feynberg in his work "The Study of Sanity in different Schools of Criminal Law and in Forensic Psychiatry" (Problemy Sudebnoy Psichiatrii, Shornik 5, 1946) enunciates a number of critical remarks concerning the anthropological school, Lombrosianism, and Neo-Lombrosianism. The author of this work refers to Professor Zernov, who had in his time exposed the profound defectiveness and unscientific basis of Lombrosianism, which was acting in the interests of bourgeois reaction, by citing the criticisms made by Academician Vyshinskiy of the anthropological school, which would degrade the personality of man to that of an ordinary automaton, in which he criticized the incorrect evaluation of the Lombrosian theory given by Kannabikh in his History of Psychiatry, who had not understood the reactionary character of Lombroso's theory, and emphasizing the fact that the anthropological school had become ideologically one of the most reactionary layers of the bourgeoisie. Nevertheless Ts. M. Feynberg's criticism of these tendencies was far from adequate because it contained a number of individual condensed remarks following a detailed exposition of the theories of individual representatives of the anthropological school

and of Neo-Lombrosianism accompanied by an endless number of examples. It included mention of Prichard, Morel, Lepin, Thompson, Fere, Munch, Ferri, etc. On page 56 alone there are mentioned several times each such authors as Kretchmer, Gundar, Lange, Luksemberger, Kan, Stumpf, Rodin. Criticism of Neo-Lombrosianism consists merely of a brief remark to the effect that Neo-Lombrosianism has been responsible in criminal law for the intensification of criminal repression and for the vindication of sterilization and castration in fascist Germany.

The tendency toward an objective exposition of certain idealistic theories without being accompanied by sharp criticism and without disclosing and proving their reactionary nature is graphically demonstrated in this work of Ts. M. Feynberg in the chapter entitled "Hegel's theory concerning Sanity and Psychic Illnesses". The author here points out that Hegel in defining sanity on the level of a legal criterion was also bringing out the medical factor. The reader might receive the impression that our Soviet theory on sanity, which also contains legal and medical criteria, was merely the reproduction of the idealistic in essence theory of Hegel. Of course Hegel in his philosophical syntheses proceeds from a dialectical unity, but in Hegel this unity refers to the unity of Absolute Idea, i. e., a purely idealistic category, while his dialectic is the dialectic of ideas that does not examine the laws of the development of matter, but seeks for an understanding of the world beyond matter.

There is no justification for the author making use of Hegel's pronouncements on psychiatry without pointing out the reactionary nature of his outlook in this field. One of the categories of his classification of psychic illnesses -- insanity and instability -- according to Hegel, "because of the shifting of the entire system of the world from trodden paths". According to Hegel, many people went mad during the period of the French Revolution because of the radical change in all civil relations. Hegel in his Philosophy of Law calls the Jacobin dictatorship a "madness of destruction", thereby showing himself up as a predecessor of Lombroso in his denunciation of the leaders of the French Revolution. Thus, if one is going to bring up the pronouncements of Hegel concerning psychiatry he must also show their reactionary nature. It should be remembered that Comrade Zhdanov used to point out during philosophical discussions that "the problem of Hegel has long been resolved. There is no justification for bringing him up anew; no new materials have appeared that have not already been studied and evaluated."

The studies of Ts. M. Feynberg on problems of sanity deserve careful attention, even though they have significant defects. The author should be given a developed analysis of criteria of sanity appearing in Soviet legislation and a more systematic development of the problem.

In English and particularly in American psychiatry Freudism is enjoying a great success in all its manifestations.

In the Soviet Union Freudism has found a place neither in medicine nor in literature. In judging Freudism as an idealistic trend because of its overvaluation of the role of the unconscious sphere and of instincts, certain authors, however, show in individual expositions of Freudism a rather tempered and not fully critical attitude.

It is obvious that such partial acceptance of Freudism can be explained by the sympathetic attitude shown it in the works of several associates of the Institute. Thus Professor A. N. Buneyev in his work "Psychogenic Reactions and Their Forensic-Psychiatric Appraisal" (Problemy Sudebnoy Psichiatrii, Vypusk 5, 1946) maintains that in the origin of conversion symptoms in hysteria "an important role is played by concepts, the operation of autosuggestion and all those complex psychic mechanisms that ^{has} been described by Freud" (page 177), which is absolutely intolerable.

Professor A. M. Khaletskiy in an article "The study and Diagnosis of Psychic Illnesses with the Help of Pharmacological Agents" (in the same issue) also could not resist the temptation of making use of Freudian mechanisms in his treatment of certain manifestations. One of his chapters is even entitled "Outbreak of Complex Reactions, Fixations, and States of Delirium" (page 276). Further on a footnote is used to say that two American doctors, Grinker and Schpitel have developed an interesting method for treating war neuroses by "narcosynthesis", which is reminiscent of the method of catharsis propagandized by Freud's followers.

The authors of recent publications put out by the Institute quite frequently abuse the use of quotations from the works of foreign authors. Such quotations in the majority of cases are completely unnecessary and sometimes merely serve to distort the true position of a given problem; they confuse the reader and do harm to the priority of Russian science.

Senior Scicentific Associate L. A. Pastushenko in an article entitled "Lingering Psychogenic Stupor and its Recognition" (Problemy Sudebnoy Psichiatrii, Sbornik 5) completely fails to mention either that coryphaeus of Russian psychiatry, Korsekov, who had written on the same question, or the Russian physician Shaykevich, who, as early as in 1904 had given an illuminating description of states of psychogenic stupor while making use of the wide body of material provided by the Russo-Japanese War. In 1905 the doctors Sukhanov and Petrov wrote up detailed descriptions of cases of conditions of stupor among persons in prison, in which, incidentally, they were the first to direct attention to the physical symptoms characteristic of this syndrome. L. A. Pastushenko in his work quotes not only foreign psychiatrists (Rekke, Willmans, Bernbaum, Bumke, Krepelin, Reichardt, etc.) who had written on psychogenic stupor subsequent to the Russian psychiatrists mentioned above without contributing anything new of importance to this subject, but he completely fails to mention Russian authors to whom, without any doubt, belongs priority for this question.

It should be mentioned that even foreign authors have quoted from the work of Shaykevich described in detail in an

opus by D. R. Lunts published by the Institute in 1933.

This deference to things foreign is also to be found in terminology. There is no justification for introducing into Russian psychiatric literature such foreign terms as "meta-simulation", "sursimulation", "primary ego", "hysterical pseudo-psychoses", "imaginary simulation", "emotional pseudodiscord". All these terms and meanings have been widely used by Doctor of Medical Sciences N. I. Felinskaya in her works. Worst of all is the fact that for some of these concepts Russian psychiatrists have completely acceptable designations, such as Govseyev's proposal of the term "pathological simulation".

For the past some time all scientific works of the Institute imeni Serbskiy have been subjected to examination and considerable discussion from the point of view of their methodological inaccuracies and to opposition for their kowtowing to foreign influence, with insistence being made on the upholding of the priority of Soviet science.

The Institute's body of scientific associates has approached this examination of scientific works and plan of study with a realization of the seriousness and importance of these questions and, in the process, has been able to benefit from the point of view of future creative work.

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